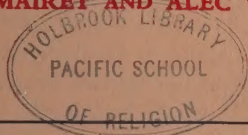


THE FRONTIER

A CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY ON THE COMMON LIFE

EDITED BY

PHILIP MAIRET AND ALEC VIDLER



SEPTEMBER 1952

Vol. III No. 9

THE DEMOCRATIC
PROCESS

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THE NEW PROLETARIANS

•

SCIENCE AND SELF

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OUR CONTRIBUTORS

"JOHN AND MARY" are the pseudonyms of two young Cambridge graduates.

SIR GEOFFREY VICKERS, V.C., formerly a solicitor, is now a member of the National Coal Board. He is Chairman of the Research Committee of the Mental Health Research Fund.

CHRISTOPHER W. M. GELL, who was a distinguished History scholar at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, was political Under-Secretary to the Government of the Punjab, 1944-5. He contracted poliomyelitis, was invalided from the I.C.S. in 1947, and now lives in South Africa, still almost completely paralysed and dependent on an iron lung at nights. He read philosophy and since 1950 has been writing in British and South African periodicals upon Asiatic and African affairs.

THE FRONTIER

A CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY ON THE
COMMON LIFE

Vol. III. No. 9.

SEPTEMBER 1952

Monthly Letter

THE electoral contest for the Presidency upon which the United States is about to enter can hardly fail to be a close-run thing. In this country also, it will excite keen interest, though less partisan feelings than might have been expected before the candidates were selected, for there is after all nothing to disconcert Europeans in the attitudes toward foreign affairs of either candidate, and both of them command, here as in America, the confidence inspired by their personal record. To us in Britain an American Party Convention appears, on the face of it, about as bad a method as we can well imagine of choosing a candidate for what is now the most responsible post in the world; and yet, by general consent, both the Republican and the Democratic Conventions this year finished by choosing the best candidate available. It appears that democracy can move in mysterious, not to say paradoxical ways, and that there must be more in the American version of it than meets the eye. Now that American political affairs receive so much more detailed attention in our newspapers—and never quite so much so as in the present year—we are at last beginning to get a better idea of how they work. And that is just as well, for the American system is likely to influence developments in many parts of the world for a long while to come.

Democracy Unlimited

There is one respect in which American democracy is, or should be, the best in the world. The ideal of responsible freedom which was the aspiration of those who laboured for democracy in Europe, was the living, daily experience of most Americans right up to the age when pioneer settlement ended about 1890. The merits of American local government, so much admired by de Tocqueville over a century ago, must still exist in a few remoter areas of the United States, if less conspicuously than in the days when Emerson took on the office of pig-inspector (unpaid) to his township because he was elected to do so—or, in modern jargon, “drafted”. This was a society in which people knew by painful experience, as many of us do not, that the only alternative to anarchy was to take the trouble to govern themselves. And throughout the whole subsequent growth of the American system to the present day, widespread experience of sovereign citizenship has kept the American mind firmly committed to the belief and the principle that power resides in the people. The whole system of “primary” elections rests upon an inference from this—i.e., that before functionaries of state or township are voted for there must be prior meetings to nominate the candidates. They must not be people who just offer themselves.

What we in Britain to-day find most curious in the American political structure, and are rather too ready to despise, is the “spoils” system. This has made political life to a very large extent a competition for paid situations in the municipal, state and federal services. After a victory of one national political party over another in Britain, only a handful of executive offices change hands; whereas in the States many thousands of holders of salaried posts, many of quite local importance and modest emolument, are fired to make room for men of the opposing party. The system is in obvious ways objectionable; it is being slowly but surely replaced by a permanent civil service more like our own. But we must recognize that it is rooted in the logical and

natural procedures of a society building up its political superstructure on the principle and practice of popular election. Since executive offices are necessarily "jobs" for those who aspire to them, politics tends to become very largely "jobbery" in the objectionable sense. A more decorous system, in which responsible officials are as far as possible permanent members of a civil service, is much to be preferred. The "spoils" system is however a function of the vitality and dynamic quality of American society, of a democracy which could never, like that of Britain, be thought of as "broadening down from precedent to precedent". It had to grow up, as Americans say, from the grass-roots, stimulated by incentives which would in fact impel a sufficiently large minority to engage in political work. This has been all the more inevitable because America is a country in which there has always been so much more interesting, more obviously useful and more lucrative work to do, and so little feeling of being in political rivalry with other states. The great disadvantages, apart from the very serious abuses and corruptions incident to the spoils system, have been further to alienate most of the best American minds from active politics, and to engender a disrespect for political life which is still reflected in a cynicism towards it, and in the buffooneries and theatricalities accompanying such major events as Party Conventions. But the improvements, both in the spirit and the system of American politics, noted by Lord Bryce shortly before the first world war have proceeded faster in the succeeding years, during which both internal and external crises have brought a good deal more seriousness and dignity into the conduct of Federal affairs.

Political Television

A new and incalculable factor of change, and one which may operate rapidly, is television. It is at least possible that this innovation determined the choice between Mr. Eisenhower and Mr. Taft as Republican candidates for the Presidency. In any case it has shown that such high

deliberations, including the framing of policies, which have always been, in practice, prerogatives of the professional politicians of the parties, will in future almost certainly have to be carried on in the presence of many millions of citizens, who both see and hear the proceedings better and more intimately than if they were seated in a mass political meeting. There is much speculation about the probable effects of this, for it is capable of indefinite development. Rousseau's conception of the only real democracy as a conclave of all the citizens assembled, which has always been a technical impossibility for any state larger than a township, is now rendered possible by electricity. Receiving sets with appliances for answering back are no doubt conceivable, and so are "electric brains" for instantaneously rendering the multitude's reactions in statistical form! The possibility of democracy being carried to its ideal or logical conclusion raises questions about the limits of the democratic idea which we have hitherto been able to neglect. In an age when governments assume such wide responsibilities as they now do and have to tackle such complex problems, it is not only a question whether ordinary citizens would ever have the ability to come to the right decisions by majority vote. It is doubtful if they would be willing to try.

"Democratic Process"

Modern democratic societies co-operate very well in national electoral contests, preceded as these are by campaigns that mobilize sufficient mass feeling. But intelligent friends of freedom have always seen that this is not enough. They exhort their fellow citizens, without very much success, to study international affairs, to join in local politics and to use all the other opportunities open to them for exercising responsible citizenship. One of the most important openings for political influence available to a large number of citizens to-day is provided by the trade unions, but there are continual complaints of apathy among their members. It has long been well known that the great majority do not

trouble to attend meetings or to pay their dues regularly, still less to qualify for office ; but to many people it was a surprise to learn that the number of unionists who take any real or sustained interest in their branches is hardly five per cent, as they have just learnt from a careful survey of trade union activities that has attracted widespread attention and comment.¹ The author is an American sociologist ; he has drawn up his report with scientific method ; and he is naturally puzzled to find any democracy, as he understands it, in institutions that have grown up in the totally different social and geographical conditions of Britain. It seems to him a social menace—and many here may share his view—that the Trade Unions, which provide a power body of often decisive weight in national politics, should be managed not by their members, as on paper they are supposed to be, but by small oligarchies, each consisting of the paid officials and the few actively interested members. His practical concern, apart from substantiating the facts of this situation, is to help towards discovering means of curing this “ apathy in the democratic process ”.

Analysis of Apathy

The enquiries into the reasons for inactive membership show that only a very small proportion are apathetic characters with a lack of interest in life. A very large proportion of inactive members is described as “ alert and inquisitive ”, and devotes much of its leisure to home crafts, hobbies and improving its domestic surroundings. But neither these, nor the others who spend most of their off-time in pursuits of lesser if any cultural value, are inactive as unionists for the reason that they think they cannot spare the relatively little time needed to qualify for the category of “ active members ”. Active members are in fact as industrious in

¹ *The Government of British Trade Unions. A Study of Apathy and the Democratic Process in the T.G.W.U.* By Joseph Goldstein (with a foreword by Arthur Deakin). Allen & Unwin. 25s.

private pursuits as the "alert and inquisitive" inactives already mentioned; yet they manage to devote at least as high a proportion of their time to Trade Union affairs as the average inactives give to the cinema. The very searching—but perhaps salutary—doubt that is borne in upon one in reading this painstaking record is whether anything else can or even ought to be expected. Exhortation is clearly ineffective, and any tendency to make trade union activity obligatory would be, like compulsory voting, retrograde from the standpoint of human freedom.

The Political Minority

Man is not an altogether political animal. He has a number of other important faculties to exercise; and, in a highly developed society with its divisions of labour and specialization, this means that only a relatively small number—this Trade Union survey would suggest only five per cent—is likely to have a real vocation for the art and science of politics. In the last resort we are as dependent on their integrity for the conduct of our political affairs as we are upon all the other specialists in a complex society for the quality of the services they render. The answers given to Mr. Goldstein, when he questioned apathetic trade unionists, generally imply confidence that those who run their unions are serving their interests as well as can be expected, or else a lack of confidence in their own knowledge and ability to help them to do better, which comes to the same thing. There are occasionally critical questions, concerned with their immediate occupational interests, which arouse a considerable number of the inactives to temporary activity; but upon the national and international issues which come before branch meetings, now that the unions have become a part of the country's political constitution, apathy remains the rule; and can we, upon reflection, say that it "ought" to be otherwise? It is true that the existing government of the trade unions often enables communists to sway their activity towards ends which imperil the welfare of the workers and

of the state ; this is indeed a vexatious development. But it can be cured only by the efforts of others who have as much political talent and industry as the communists and a more statesmanlike vision of worker-interests. It is these wiser and better leaders of the trade union oligarchies (who, incidentally, are holding their own not so badly) who most often complain about apathy ; and such measures as they are able to take towards the better political education of the rank-and-file are often meritorious. But even on the longest view, neither the union's nor the nation's political problems are going to be solved by the non-political majority.

Knowledge and Responsibility

Is government by experts then the only logical conclusion ? Well, there cannot be good government without some expertise, but a still more vital qualification is moral reliability. The political workers need to be trusted and trustworthy, and our democratic methods are hard-won means of ensuring that they should be so. So far as these means succeed, it is less by furnishing electoral checks upon the abuse of responsibility than by bringing the group and individual units of society into personal contact and communication at every level. In the trade unions more of this could be done, no doubt, by the kind of procedural reforms that Mr. Goldstein proposes, but probably not much. One would like to see more Christians, with the required competence, being both impelled and encouraged to play as active a rôle as the communists in branch politics. Nor should the present system be regarded as fixed and sacrosanct ; we need to devise more means whereby ordinary citizens can participate in the conduct of common affairs that lie closer to their own interests and to the essentials of social well-being. This is even more important than the kind of higher education in general knowledge which is often urged as the cure for apathy. There are studies that not everyone wants or ought to pursue ; and what passes for education in citizenship can easily become merely additional exposure to mass informa-

tion about this perplexing world and all the divergent views about its problems—an oppressive knowledge of difficulties which, to your intelligent boiler-maker or motor-driver who can do nothing much about them, may be merely a burden. One of the great attractions of Communism is the haven that it provides for the intellectually bewildered, for whom it also finds new activities within their capacity. Until our system enables the average worker to find a sphere of social action nearer home and work-place, he will have some reason to prefer a state of apathy about world political and economic salvation.

Essence of Democracy

Unhappily, we are still breeding a resentment that is worse than apathy. A report on the mentality of the British miner has just been issued by the Acton Society Trust,¹ which shows that certain fixed attitudes—an invincible suspicion of everyone in authority, and a conviction that the general public regards miners as inferior—remain unaltered in these days of welfare services and nationalization.

Evidently our conception of “the democratic process” is in need of an overhaul. Concentration upon the process—upon electoral machineries of various kinds—is always tending to make them into ends in themselves, and to obscure the only thing that is really valid in the idea of democracy—which is the cultivation of contact and understanding among all the working groups of a society and between them and the political groups with governmental responsibility. What we call apathy is invariably a breakdown or decay of this essential social relation. In the case of the trade unions, it is really a moot point whether a system that mixes the interests of occupational groups with national and world-political questions is a good one in principle; but it is the system which has grown up in this country. We shall have

¹ *The Workers' Point of View*. Published by the Acton Society Trust. W.I. Price 2s.

to live with it for a long while yet and make the best of it. After all, then, we must do everything we can to diminish apathy and secure more intelligent co-operators. But we shall do well to remember that, as one of Mr. Goldstein's reviewers remarks,¹ this co-operation may not be a thing that can be tackled direct but "one of those things which, like happiness or, be it said, higher productivity, elude direct action".

The Chinese, to judge by their classic literature, always understood the essence of democracy as a continuous cultivation of confidence between the rulers and the ruled. Not that we need to refer back to the Chinese. Christian communities have produced societies consisting of self-governing groups of thinkers, rulers, organizers and workers as complex as, and not less harmonious than, those of any period anywhere. Our present troubles are above all due to neglect of Christian community and over-reliance upon democratic procedure as a substitute for it. Democracy is a system that presupposed community, and without it is bound to disintegrate into a merely "managed" system, a rule of the apathetic by the cynical.

This is a vicious circle that will not be broken without individual, sacrificial action, sometimes involving voluntary abandonment of more privileged vocations for humbler occupations. We have heard a good deal lately about obedience to such calls in France, where there is a new kind of priest who exchanges the cassock for the workman's overall. Such a thing is not unknown in this country. As you will see from the Personal Letter we are very glad to publish in the following pages, this cannot be done from the political motive. It is a witness to be borne only for the love of God and man. Nevertheless it is only through such missions of dedication to, and identification with, the human being in the citizen that we shall ever fully understand democratic apathy or overcome it.

¹ Mr. R. P. Lynton in *The Tablet*, June 26th, 1952.

INTERIM

Bishop Newbigin

Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, who will be the speaker at the Frontier Luncheon on September 19th, was a Church of Scotland missionary before he became Bishop in Madhurai and Ramnad in the Church of South India. He is one of the youngest of the leading figures in the Ecumenical Movement, and has already made his mark as a theologian, witness his book on *The Reunion of the Church*. He is known to a much wider circle of readers through his *South India Diary* (S.C.M. Press), which is a fascinating description of his day-to-day work as a chief pastor in one of the younger Churches. In his address to a Frontier Luncheon on September 19th he will be speaking not so much about the inner life of the Church as about the kind of society in which the Christian community in South India is set and to which it has to bear its witness.

The Luncheon will be held at the Royal Empire Society from 12.45 to 2 p.m. The Chairman will be Sir Walter Moberly, K.C.B., G.B.E., D.S.O., who is Principal of St. Catharine's, Cumberland Lodge, and Chairman of the Christian Frontier Council. Tickets (5s.) can be obtained not later than September 17th from The Christian Frontier, 8 The Cloisters, Windsor Castle.

The New B.B.C. Director

By the time these words appear the new Governors of the British Broadcasting Corporation may have chosen their Director-General. Of two of his predecessors in that exalted office a recent writer (William Clark in the *Observer*, August 3) made the astute remark that "Lord Reith gave the B.B.C. a sense of independence and a distaste for vulgarity which it has never lost; Sir William Haley has developed the sense that news is sacred and comment must be free".

In each case the Director-General turned out, providentially, to be capable of maintaining something that was especially endangered by drift or inertia of his time. The twenties and thirties were the real "waste land" period; in the forties the dominant problem was the conflict between truth and propaganda. The scope of the B.B.C. is such that no one individual can keep track of everything it is doing. In that sense alone the responsibility of its executive head far exceeds that of an editor of even the largest daily paper: he is a cultural statesman, needing the ability to choose men and delegate authority, but he

must also have insight into the trends of the time, both good and bad, if he is to resist the forces of disintegration and raise standards—to the modest degree in which the latter is possible.

What outstanding demand the 'fifties will make upon the new Director can be only conjectured, but everyone knows that it is most likely to arise from television, in which there is soon to be commercial competition. The successful broadcaster of the future lacks the mantle of invisibility; he has to have presence as well as plausibility. Even in serious broadcasting, which is meant only to be informative, this has its consequences, and much more so in broadcast argument and controversy. Unexpected results may emerge from such an accentuation of personality in broadcasting. It has been against Broadcasting House policy to allow individuals to build themselves up into radio personalities of any formidable power. Sponsored television may have no such inhibition. This suggests explosive possibilities—since television can magnify a thousand-fold the effect of a great public meeting—of which the Government's advisers were aware when they decided that sponsored programmes must not include items of religious or political importance. And that rule if it can be maintained, could magnify the real preponderance of B.B.C. influence by about the same ratio. Only through its services, for instance, could the intensely personal ministry of preaching perhaps regain, through a modern technique, something of the power it once exercised—that is, if the preachers should be forthcoming. A more immediate and hardly less vital problem, that will become more pressing with the extension of television, is the sharper edge it gives to controversy of every kind. One can think of no one standing in greater need of prayer than the new Director-General.

"American Comics"

For the benefit of its readers—and doubtless for its sins—this column has just been subjected to a brief but intensive course of reading in that branch of *mod. lit.* which has recently been so widely denounced by parents', teachers' and marriage-guidance associations. The 'American Comics' thus elevated to journalistic and even Parliamentary attention are, incidentally, not comic and often not American. Most of those circulating in this country are printed either on the Continent or here, though often from material supplied from America or produced in imitation of American examples. This column's conclusions—after recovering from the effort sufficiently to draw any—

are that the entertainment in question is older than some of its critics seem to imagine; but that it does seem to be developing some pernicious forms.

A study of the children's comics, plain and coloured, of fifty years ago and of the "penny bloods" of the same period would show that the two *genres* have coalesced in the typical "comic" strip magazine of to-day. There is less farcical stuff, but reliance upon the same stimulating subjects—crime (violent and often lethal) detection, wild west adventure, wild animals and negroes in Africa, mystery, horror, scientific marvels, intrepid boy heroes. The psychological motives thus exploited are those found in nursery poetry and fantasy as far back as the earliest fairy tales. The present "comics" are the mixture as before with some up-to-date colouring matter—and less than one might expect. It appears chiefly in the increase of "scientific" marvels, especially fantasies of inter-planetary travel.

Is there a Case for Action?

The nasty developments are in some of the ghost and horror narratives, the number of sub-human, monstrous characters and in some elaborations of the appeal to primitive interest in violence. The actual effect of these publications on the child mind needs to be estimated by a panel of competent child psychologists; and if many examples are as noxious as they appear to a layman, preventive action should not be excluded. The response of the H.O. Parliamentary Secretary, when the question was raised in Parliament, was to place the responsibility for any prohibition upon the teachers and parents; but this is to underrate the problem. Both Sweden and Canada apply a censorship to children's literature. It is however true that there is less good to be expected from prohibition of the bad than from provision of the good. The strip picture story has become, for good or ill, a part of our culture, and it has its positive and potential values. Some who realize its abuses have worked to prevent them by providing better examples. For instance, after perusing a pile of the average output of 'comics' one has but to look at the weekly *Eagle* to see how well this can be done.

THE NEW PROLETARIANS :

A PERSONAL LETTER

Introduction

This letter was originally written for private circulation among our friends, and we have now been asked to publish it in *The Frontier*.

The descriptive parts of the letter were not intended to give a typical picture of working class life in this country. As such they would be wholly misleading, for even our own limited experience has taught us that social characteristics vary greatly from one place to another, even within a distance of a few miles. We only attempted in writing this letter to describe the people we had met ourselves and the problems we were up against, so that our friends would be better able to pray for us.

In editing the letter for publication, we have concealed the identity of places and people and made a few other alterations, and in three places we have added later comments in square brackets ; but we have refrained from making any major alterations in order to be sure of preserving the original character. However, we would like to have altered the paragraph on pages 349-350, as the views about the effects of factory work and of life in the town as opposed to the country which we have expressed there have led to some controversy and misunderstanding, which we regret. We realize now that their truth is open to question : but in saying this we in no way wish to invalidate the conclusion of the paragraph, for we have not there expressed our own opinion, but God's eternal truth. For we do believe that there is something unjust in our social set-up, and we think that most people in this country, at any rate those who have sensed the goodness there can be in life, know in their hearts that this is so. It has probably been so in every society, and we do not say that ours is any different in this respect ; but we do want to recall to people that the cause of this injustice

is human sin, and that therefore the only ultimate cure which God offers is for men to respond to the problem with personal self-giving. It is with this response that the conclusion of the paragraph is concerned.

February, 1952.

DEAR ———,

Here we are in a modern industrial suburb of west London. We have been here since early in September, so now we are well settled in. We are living in one furnished room and enjoying it immensely. We pay £2 a week rent, and extra for gas. We are in a fairly big room in a house owned by pleasant people, having been turned out of the first room in which we settled, which was a small room in a modern house; we shared the kitchen there with the family. Our landlady there was always complaining about one thing or another, and eventually we got annoyed with her and she gave us notice on the spot. In this room we are self-contained (with free use of the bathroom) and have a gas cooker in one corner. We also wash up in here, fetching the water from the bathroom, and even finish drying and airing the washing in here. We do not find this at all uncomfortable. There are three families in this house, living in six rooms.

As soon as we returned from our honeymoon we started looking for a room here, and found one in three days, from an advertisement board outside a shop. It seems to surprise some of our friends that we found digs before looking for a job, but that is the normal procedure for people doing factory work. When we did come to look for jobs, we both found them without any delay, through the Employment Exchange.

John is working 49½ hours a week (7.30 a.m.—5.30 p.m., and 7.30—12.0 on Saturdays) at a most monotonous and soul-destroying job. It is in a small factory employing 150 men. I (here and throughout the letter the words “I” and “me” refer to John) work with another man (hereafter referred

to as my mate—I have had three different mates since I have been here), taking planks of wood as they come off a circular saw, and stacking them in piles. But the factory is not well organized, and frequently the job becomes a bit more complicated than that. Between the wars the furniture trade was a sweated industry, and this particular factory had a bad name for sweating—the tradition still seems to be there in the atmosphere of the place. I find the hours exhausting, in the sense that I come home too tired to write a letter, but not too tired to go to the pictures, though this has been getting less noticeable recently. Pay is good: £7 15s. od. a week, but that is partly because our regular working hours include some time which is, strictly speaking, overtime. In general, working hours are longer than many middle class people imagine; most workers work some overtime, and the basic week, without overtime, is usually about 45 hours. This is normally a nine-hour day, not including lunch and meal breaks. It is our experience that laziness is not one of the workers' vices.

Mary worked five hours a day (7.30–12.30) at a food factory, but has recently stopped work because we are expecting a baby in a few months' time and she gets too tired. She picked out the defective bits as they passed her on a moving belt, but she was also shifted frequently on to other jobs—a practice which is generally disliked. The girls talk a lot at work, and she used to get on well with them. While Mary was still at work, this was the most interesting part of our work here, as we learnt a vast amount that we had never even suspected about their attitudes and home life. She has also been having an interesting time trying to improve working conditions at the factory, which in many ways are quite shocking. Mary frequently had to work sitting still for five hours in a room which was draughty and open to the open air, with a temperature little if anything above that outdoors (i.e. about freezing). We have discovered that there is a clause in the Factory Acts which insists on a reasonable temperature for such work, but this

factory can technically evade the clause on the ground that it was built before the Act was passed. This was the explanation given to Mary by the factory manager, when after several attempts she managed to obtain an interview with him. She had first complained to the Welfare Officer, who was not even interested (believe it or not !). We hope something further can be done about this, and we are hoping to discuss the matter with a senior member of the Factory Inspectorate. [He has since told us that the statement made by the manager was false, but that in effect it is possible to evade the Act because of the difficulty of getting a licence for the necessary building.] The girls are normally apathetic about anything like this, and in general would leave their job rather than complain. It seems that it doesn't occur to women to do anything about bad conditions, but only to grumble. A large proportion of women leave within a month of coming, and this does not occur at other factories. (There is also a constant stream of newcomers to take their places, because of the unusual laxity of hours ; women can choose a part-time shift starting at almost any hour of the day, and this is attractive.)

We have mentioned that both at Mary's work and at John's the work is seldom continuous for a long period. You might think that this makes the work less boring, but in practice it does the opposite and makes the time pass more slowly. The girls most strongly object to being shifted from job to job, and at John's work the men get very fed up because they are frequently interrupted by some other small job that needs doing. The art of making time pass quickly when doing a factory job is to get oneself into a state of coma (or in the case of the women to get involved in a conversation), and naturally this is more difficult if you are interrupted. None of the jobs is interesting in itself, and a variation in uninteresting jobs is not interesting either—unless, as sometimes happens, the variation is sufficiently unusual to be interesting in itself ; though the men at any rate do their best to take some pride in their work.

This borough consists mainly of clean modern houses with nice little gardens, but with two or three families living in each house. Most of the people came here from all over the country between the wars, because of unemployment. They are respectable and contented with life, at any rate with the social status the Labour government has given them, and there is little or no sign of class bitterness. [We now feel that this statement is only a half truth. In other ways which we had not noticed at first we have found that class bitterness is intense.] Actually these people, at any rate in their leisure hours, are in some ways nearer to the middle class than they are to the people in the slums of Bristol, where John took a job for a short time two years ago, in order to gain some experience. (We think this is largely due to the difference in housing conditions.) There is a good deal of house pride and interest in gardening, which is encouraging. Also at John's firm's Christmas social and dance, we were interested to find that the social atmosphere was much the same as it might be at any middle class social.

The gap between the church and the people is not noticeably one of class. How different the situation is in this respect from Sheffield or Bristol is shown by the fact that one day Jack, my first mate, classed "the church people, that is, the priests and people like that", with Trade Unions, etc., as one of the power groups in the country who backed "the Labour". That was a casual remark in conversation. Later, when asked why, he replied that "they believe in helping the people, they believe in doing good". But needless to say, he is "not interested in religion", to use his own phrase, and the proportion of churchgoers one meets at work is small.

In spite of its encouraging outward appearance, this is on the whole a depressing community to us, much more depressing than the slums of Bristol. Respectability, combined with life in the town as opposed to the country, and with automatic and dehumanizing work, seems to be destroying the truly human qualities of people. These

things seem to be destroying that for which God made man—that which distinguishes a man from a machine. Although we have not been here long, we have already experienced for ourselves what a deadening effect this kind of work can have. We noticed, when we both had 'flu shortly before Christmas and were away from work for ten days, what a better "tone" our life took on. Work has always involved pain and drudgery, and we do not say that in this respect factory work is necessarily worse than other kinds. But we all know how it is possible for the most uneducated countryman to be a man of culture, in its fundamental sense of the development of the soul, and we feel that this is very difficult, if not impossible, for these factory workers. Whatever his work, life is for the countryman one unified whole, lived directly in contact with God, whereas for the factory worker it is at the most only very indirectly in contact with God. We notice in our own reactions that long hours in a factory tend to exhaust the desire to do anything worthwhile with life. When one is "released" in the evening or at week-ends, one naturally seeks after excitement and distraction. This effect of factory work helps to explain why, in his leisure hours, the working man usually turns to recreations which many people deplore. Please do not blame him when you see him queueing up for the pictures; we should rather blame ourselves, for our culture is only possible because he supports us by work which makes culture, even in its fundamental sense, for him well nigh impossible. We are destroying these people's lives in order to save our own souls. And yet Christ said, "Whosoever would save his soul (Gk. *psyche*) shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his soul for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9. 24 R.V. margin). Please think about this. If Christians had the *faith* to renounce the influential jobs, with the reliance on the ways of the world which they imply, and to take upon themselves the soul-destroying work, which in our present civilization has to be done by someone, they would be dealing with the problem in God's way.

This is the way God works to save the world. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men".

Incidentally, the educated man is better equipped to withstand the evil effects of factory work without harm to himself than is the ordinary worker, for his mind is better trained to think and he has more to think about, so that he has more chance of keeping his mind occupied while doing work which in itself cannot possibly occupy the mind of anyone fully. I am specially lucky in this respect, and can do this work with unusually little frustration, because I have a great capacity for entertaining myself with my own thoughts.

Having finished that digression we return to our description of the life here. Many tendencies which are true of the whole of our modern society are seen here more intensely. People are not very interested in each other; they are not even interested in us and why we are doing this work; and they very seldom carry on a consecutive conversation about anything—this latter point we find particularly annoying! This may not seem very surprising, and yet I did not find any of this so marked in the more slummy community of Bristol.

Particularly we notice that the family is in fact no more than a collection of individuals who live entirely separate existences, and even the idea of true family life has completely died out. People never visit one another's homes. When my mate Jack came here once, it was the first time he had ever been inside anyone else's home, although he is a married man of thirty-seven. (A certain amount of visiting is done among members of a family. Otherwise people meet in places other than the home.) It is this isolation of everyone, and the superficiality of the contact between them, which make it very difficult for us to get to know anyone properly. We have the feeling that a great deal could be done here through the home and through friendship. We did feel that coming to see us in our home made

a great impression on Jack, and the girl whom we mention below seemed to enjoy a homely atmosphere, and we think this may have influenced her. Unfortunately Jack has now left my work, because he had a row with the man who pushes the wood in at the other end of the saw, and we have lost contact with him.

The attitude towards marriage and family life is poisonous; it pervades everything, and it must be very difficult for children brought up even in a Christian family to remain uncontaminated. Needless to say, divorces are so common that one doesn't notice them. In our first digs, our landlady was a spinster, and the others who lived there were a woman separated from her husband and a boy of eighteen whose parents were divorced. Jack's parents were divorced, and he was brought up in an orphanage. The only woman John knows at work is seeking a divorce. Mary knows lots of women who are separated or divorced, and others who are seeking divorces (including a girl of twenty-one). She has only met one girl who positively likes being married.

Young married couples regard the acquisition of a house and furniture as far more important than having a family. (In the main part of the town there are six good furniture shops and six house agents, but there is not a single good bookshop, nor anywhere where one can buy a book token.) If it is a choice between having a baby or a television set, the television set wins. Abortion is common; typical was one woman's remark to Mary when she suspected that she might be going to have a baby (it was then too early for even the doctor to say certainly): "I think you are pregnant, my dear. Gin and Epsom salts will get rid of it for you." This was the least shocking of the methods she suggested, most of which I could not repeat. I thought that having once been an Able Seaman I was from henceforth unshockable, but the women here horrify me beyond measure. And they swear worse than the men. This woman was intensely respectable, regarding the polishing of floors as the only thing that mattered in life. When it eventually sunk into

her that Mary wanted to have a baby, she was utterly amazed.

The creed or attitude of materialism has sunk in so deeply here that it goes entirely unquestioned. People do not realize that any other attitude exists, and the witness of the Churches and of Christians is so weak that everyone has the impression that the Christian faith is as materialistic as they are. There is one man at my works who has taken a bit of interest in me, and he is completely stunned and baffled by my taking a factory job when I need not. Although I have tried to drum it into him, he has not yet grasped that it is because I believe that there are things more important than material satisfaction. In words he is perfectly ready to agree that the spiritual matters more than the material, but in practice he seems utterly incapable of imagining that there could be any other attitude than materialism. I feel that no amount of preaching and speaking about this subject would ever sink into these people, as, if it were not accompanied by unmistakable practical example, it would be treated as insincere. (People here do not seriously expect *anyone* to be sincere. That is plain truth, even though you may think it incredible.) Even the living example of what we are doing seems to have no effect. But surely if nothing else works practical example is our only hope. (Not that practical example should be our last resort; I believe passionately that practical example of this sort is always a prime necessity in evangelism.)

The crying need here is not for a gospel which tells of Christianity's concern and call for social justice (though of course Christians must put it into practice), but for one which preaches the insignificance of all material benefits; whatever his material circumstances it is only in God that man can find his end and fulfilment. (But for the benefit of those of you who do not know me very well, I should like to say that I have always been, and still am, intensely conscious of the need for social justice. It is a mockery of love to pretend to care for a person's soul, without first doing

everything in one's power, to the extent of sacrificing oneself, to care for his material welfare.)

We have said that the number of Christians here is small, but it is not nearly as small as it is among the working class in other industrial areas which we know about. John has already met three keen and active Christians among those with whom he has come into contact at work, which at a guess would give a proportion of about five per cent. But we are sure this is not representative. Mary met one woman at work who went to church, and she knew about a hundred women altogether, as they kept getting shifted around. Probably nearer the true proportion would be given by the figures at a certain factory near here which employs 9,000 men. There is a Christian group there embracing all denominations which has about thirty members (including members of the staff). This gives a proportion of 1 in 300, if all the Christians are members of it. Of the three Christians John knows at work, one belongs to the Salvation Army. He was our Trade Union Secretary, but he was sacked recently and we nearly had a strike about it. One is a Methodist; he has been a clerk and is only temporarily doing his present job, so he can hardly be counted as a regular manual worker. The third, Paddy, who is now my mate, is a Roman Catholic, and he is the only one with whom I have felt any real spiritual fellowship and understanding. It is interesting that he comes from a farm in Ireland and is a countryman through and through. He has only been here a short time, having been forced into this factory work by economic necessity. Both in what he is and in what he says, he is the strongest possible confirmation of the ideas about the evil effects of factory life as compared with the country, which we have mentioned above.

As you know, we are doing this work as missionaries, in order to convert our fellow-workers to Christ. But we do feel that God has called us to work in this particular way because it is an expression in this civilization of the way of

the Cross. We have explained this to some extent at the end of the paragraph on pages 350-351.

We have been doing very little actively in the way of evangelism so far, but one of the girls from John's work has started to come to church with us regularly on Sunday evenings. She had never been to church before, and knows very little about Jesus. I first got to know her in our canteen, when she enquired about a Christian book I was reading, and then she paid us a visit in our room one evening. I tried to explain a bit about our faith, but it did not seem to hold much meaning for her. However, later in the evening she herself suggested, to our great surprise, that she would like to come to church with us. I feel that she was ready for this step because the seed was sown by Paddy (the R.C. mentioned above) and his brother, who have known her for nearly a year. Paddy is just as pleased that she is coming to a Church of England church with us, as he would be if she were going to a Roman Catholic Church with him, which is an example of his clear insight into what really matters. We do not feel that the fact that she is coming to church necessarily means much. It may be a genuine movement of the Spirit, but on the other hand she is living alone, and may just find Christian friendship comforting. But in either case our job is to lead her on to the full knowledge of and commitment to Christ, and churchgoing is not necessarily a decisive step in this direction. [She did not go on coming to church with us for long, and we have now lost contact with her as she has left the factory and the neighbourhood, and none of her old friends knows where she is.]

In general there are very few signs as yet that we are getting anywhere at all—though things do seem to have become a bit more lively lately, and one or two men have started to take a little interest from time to time. We are not actively doing much, but learning and thinking, and we feel that in this we are getting somewhere (towards a deeper understanding both of our own faith and of the mind of the

factory worker), though it may be a long process. It is difficult to get to know the people properly, and when there is conversation at work, I normally remain in the background, say little, and try to take in much. I have not been seeking to start conversations on religious subjects, and frequently I do not even take advantage of one when it occurs, unless it seems natural to do so.

There is so much we want to say that we could go on for ever, but one has to stop a letter somewhere. There are a few final remarks we would like to make.

Some of our friends seem to be under the impression that we are only intending to do this work temporarily, to gain experience in preparation for something else. That is not so. We cannot know how God will guide us, but we regard factory work and living with working people as our life's occupation.

It may interest some of you to know that we are both now Associates of the British Sociological Association, and have been to two of its London meetings. . . .

Yours very sincerely,

“JOHN AND MARY.”

SCIENCE AND SELF

By GEOFFREY VICKERS

Why Blame Science ?

Many religious thinkers to-day concur in blaming science for much of our present predicament. On the one hand, so the argument runs, it has increased our power but not our wisdom and so rendered our folly even more dangerous ; on the other hand, by accustoming us to exploit things, it has prepared our minds for exploiting people. Neither half of the argument seems to me to be wholly true and both ignore some aspects of scientific advance, which I should have thought are spiritually much more important.

If exploiting things led to exploiting people, we might expect that men who earn their livings by pushing things about would be the most inhuman of men. In my experience the reverse is true. Men whose business it is to do violence to nature—to flatten airfields with bulldozers, for instance, or to blast tunnels in rock—seem to be rather more alive than the average run of men to the difference between people and things. No doubt the exploiting of man by man is an endemic human sin ; but it becomes an occupational disease only among those whose business it is to manage people in the mass ; and this, I believe, has always been so.

If the argument were valid, this tendency would at least have grown more marked ; and writers, looking back to the threat of Nazi and Fascist and around at the threat of the Commissar, think it self-evident that this is so. History in this country at least does not confirm the verdict. Although economic and social controls are more numerous and far reaching than for many decades, authority is less arbitrary than ever before. The rights of man—any man—as an individual human being were never so much respected in England as they are to-day. The long tale of oppression

by baron, squire and magnate is little more than a memory. We even take its passing for granted.

Science and Christian Insights

Furthermore, this change, which has notably quickened during the last fifty years, has been due in no small degree to discoveries of science. With little help from the older sciences, psychology has evolved conceptions of human nature profoundly different from those which operated a century ago ; and these have obtained common acceptance, not only in the applied social sciences but also in the ordinary relations of life. Education and penology have been transformed ; business management talks a new language ; authority, public and private, has adopted an entirely new conception of how human beings work.

These changes seem to me to be of spiritual significance far greater than attaches to all the changes which have occurred in our conception of the physical world. Our standards, our ideals, even the channels in which our energies run are deeply affected by our inner idea of ourselves, and our environment ; and this environment is essentially the environment which challenges us to respond. In this inner scheme of reference the greater physical conceptions play little part. The flat earth beneath its over-arching heaven may roll itself into a ball and lose itself in an expanding Universe. Matter may break up into atoms and then dissolve in energy. What difference does it make to the life of man with himself or man with man ? But it is far otherwise with any change in the conception of self and neighbour. These conceptions have been affected in recent decades, not primarily by the indirect implications of the physicists' formulae but deeply and directly by the new conceptions of biology, psychology and sociology.

There is plenty of room for God in an expanding Universe. It scarcely involves even a change in imagery. John Donne begins a famous sonnet—

“ At the round earth’s imagined corners blow
Your trumpets, Angels. . . .”

combining with no shadow of effort the old and the new cosmologies. But is there room for a soul in the evolved and evolving atoms of human kind or for the law of love in their relations one with another? This is what matters. Is it not significant, then, that one of the tentative discoveries about human nature put forward by secular psychology is the power of love to prevent and cure sin? When science is innocently advancing such startling confirmation of Christian insights, why should Christians bother about split atoms?

The psychologist does not put it just like that, but that is very much what he means and what the man in the street understands him to mean. Thus every filmgoer, every newspaper reader to-day believes that there is likely to be a causal relationship between the deprived child and the adult and adolescent criminal. This love which can build for one child a haven of security even in a mad world and can thus equip it to give back the same powerful influence in after life, whilst the absence of love may leave another imprisoned in self and capable of no contact with its kind but aggression—this is much less than all a Christian means by love, but at least it has the right ring.

Science and the Lay Mind

Not all or even most of the insights of biology or psychology or sociology appear to be in any striking conformity with the doctrines of Christianity. On the contrary, many of them appear to be in equally striking contradiction. Whether contradictory or confirmatory, they would seem to be by far the most important aspects of science for Christians. The ideas about self and neighbour which are implicit in them, far more than the conceptions of physical science, determine for the ordinary man what religious ideas he will find easy to accept and in what form they will be

acceptable to his intellect or his imagination. Moreover, it is these insights which should most clearly correspond with the assertions of religion if both are true. It is possible, though, I think, unsound to keep religion and science in watertight compartments when one is talking about "the physical world" and the other about "the soul". It is much less possible when both are making statements about human nature.

The methods as well as the findings of science have made a deep impression on the average man. He knows how easily he can deceive himself; he is on his guard against wishful thinking. He has been taught to regard it as an act not of courage but of cowardice to hold on to a belief which is not corroborated by those results in the world about him to which he would expect it to lead; and the more comforting the belief, the more suspect it seems. Those who seek to commend to him a religious faith should recognize and respect this attitude. Nor is it unreasonable of him to expect that statements about the nature of man and the way in which, being so constituted, he should live, should be corroborated by experience, not necessarily in human history but certainly in individual human lives.

The educated layman to-day believes that he is part of a process whereby life in all its forms has evolved and is evolving on this earth. He himself had a beginning in the fortuitous meeting of two cells, each freighted with an age-old inheritance of potency and limitation and producing an unique combination, elaborately limited but not necessarily determined, which will develop for a time and will then die and break up. He is not, however, a wholly separate entity but is linked through time and space, both with past generations with which he has a continuous physical bond and, more subtly and obscurely, with those who form his human environment and with whom he is in inescapable mutual rapport. He has begun—despite what contemporary theologians say of him—to learn from science that the observer and the observed are not as separate as his grand-

father or even his father believed and that the individual, even himself, cannot usefully be abstracted from his context. Indeed, he is perhaps prone to think too exclusively in terms of social values and social obligations. At all events he has an increasingly developed social sense. He believes that consciousness, including his awareness of himself, such as it is, is also a product of evolution and results from the progressive elaboration of his brain and central nervous system and that it is no more than a fitful light playing on the surface of a sub-conscious abyss which he cannot directly know and within which are generated all his vital forces. He does not on this account regard himself as necessarily an automaton. On the contrary he believes that, though living is evidently a more complicated art than his ancestors supposed, the better understanding of himself which science is giving him offers him a better chance both of understanding what success in living means and of approaching a little nearer to it. He is not, therefore, without responsibility or without hope. He is glad to be relieved of some of the psychological conceptions implicit in evangelical Christianity, which he conceives to have been simply wrong; he no longer thinks of himself as a ship specially built and commissioned for an individual voyage, officered by reason, conscience and will (each divinely certificated) and in radio communication with the Owners. But he can still retain the belief that within the limitations of heredity and environment there is within himself a wide range of possibilities, some of which are more deserving of realization than others and that he has a capacity, an interest and even a duty to pursue the better rather than the worse.

Meantime, the sciences of life are drawing slowly nearer to some of the unsolved problems of philosophy; and however far they may be from offering solutions they are already affecting the mental expectations of those to whom these problems matter. One of these is the relation of self and neighbour. Is the individual a self-contained entity or a cell in a social organism? There is some reason to think

that this dilemma is unreal or rather that it results from inappropriate habits of language and thought. The physical sciences have partially solved a similar problem by devising new concepts in which (in so far as I understand them) relatedness is seen to be an integral part of the "given". It may well be that psychology also will devise and make familiar new ways of thinking and talking about the individual, which will help to resolve this dilemma in all its many forms or at least to show how it may be transcended.

The Significance of Self-awareness

Thus these sciences are already telling the ordinary man something significant about himself. The power of conscious thought has an obvious survival value, so it is in no way surprising that it should have evolved, assuming as results seem to indicate, that it is a function to which the laws of evolution apply. One manifestation of it is the power to think about oneself; and since this also appears to have evolved, it may be assumed that it also has survival value and consequently that, however partial, distorted and intermittent it may be, it is more often than not sufficiently adequate for its purpose to be on the whole an advantage rather than a handicap. On the other hand, it has an obvious danger which psychiatric experience appears to confirm. An object of thought must have a certain degree of precision and tends to acquire greater precision with much thinking; and it may well be that the habit of thus hypostatizing ourselves is liable to give us in our own eyes an exaggerated appearance of separateness and to mask the relationships which link us to our neighbour. As the eye of a man walking in mist carves out around him a moving circle of clarity, illusory but inescapable, so self-awareness tends to enclose us in a fictitious, egocentric world and thus to hamper and even to destroy that rapport with the environment which it should quicken and refine. In extreme cases it can reduce us to impotence, as any mental hospital will prove. In less extreme forms it accounts for

much of the unhappiness and frustration of human life. Man conscious is man potentially lonely.

Thus, in the long course of evolution man has developed, along with the power of self-awareness, the joys, the agonies, the powers and the dangers of reflective life. He has developed the sense of choosing his way, a sense which certainly exaggerates his freedom of choice but which may not be unreal, still less escapable. The same power besets him with the danger of isolation, which may lead him to misrepresent to himself his relationship with his environment and may reduce him to impotence, misery, insanity and death. He cannot escape this by putting back the evolutionary clock; he can only transcend it by a clear understanding of his situation. He can refuse to believe in the egocentric circle of self-consciousness. He can break his prison by realizing the relatedness which it masks; and if he does so, his self-awareness, so far from being a handicap, will fulfil the function which has earned it its development. It will enable him to be more fully himself.

A secular psychologist might describe the human predicament in some such words. An exponent of Christian doctrine might say, "Man has eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and thereby saddled himself with a curse. He can escape from this but only by an act of regeneration. He must die to himself; he must lose his soul in order to find it. . . ."

Both these people would be purporting to make statements about human nature. Can the similarity of their statements be accidental?

Science and the Idea of God

"But," the Christian apologist may say, "your psychologist tells us nothing about what is the central feature of our good news. A man must indeed be born anew but he cannot do this for himself. We say that there is a Power in the world, immanent in it and yet transcending it, by which and by which alone a man can be redeemed. The

love which your psychiatrist talks about is only a remote reflection of the love of God. What has science to say about that ? ”

To this the psychologist might reply.

“ Science can work only on the material of human experience, for the most objective observation is only an experience. We do not and cannot know to what external realities our experiences correspond and some scientists on this account think it unsound to assume that any such external realities exist. Others deduce their existence from the fact that the observations of different people at different times strikingly agree and make it possible to devise elaborate conceptual systems from which valid predictions can be made. Science, however, is confined to hypotheses which can be verified by observation. There may be important truths which can be divined by intuition but which cannot be verified by observation. If so, they fall outside the realm of science and their truth is not demonstrable. Science is bound to regard them with suspicion because it has no certain evidence that intuition can secure a foothold on truth higher than observation can subsequently confirm, whilst it has abundant evidence of man’s capacity to deceive himself. Science, however, cannot disprove them, unless it can observe facts which are other than they would be if the belief were true.”

“ A belief in a God such as you describe,” he might conclude, “ would go far to defend the individual against the dangers implicit in self-awareness. It would tend to free him from imprisonment in self, to give him an unassailable security, to defend him against anxiety and inner conflict and to enable him to be as coherent, as happy and as potent as his make-up permitted. It would, therefore, show itself strikingly in human conduct. But it would not on that account be proved true.”

Alternatively, he might draw a different conclusion from the evidence. An eminent experimental psychologist

recently wrote :—

“I confess that I cannot see how anybody who looks fairly at a reasonable sample of actions claiming a religious sanction can honestly refuse to admit that many of them could not occur, or at least that it is highly improbable that they would occur in the forms in which they do, if they were simply the terminal points of a psychological sequence, every item of which belonged to our own human day-to-day world. I am not thinking of dramatic and extraordinary actions. . . . I remember the ways of life of many unknown and humble people whom I have met and respected. It seems to me that these people have done effectively and consistently many things which all ordinary sources of evidence seem to set outside the range of unassisted humanity. When they say—‘It is God working through me,’ I cannot see that I have either the right or the knowledge to reject their testimony.”¹

The issue between Sir Reginald Bartlett and my imaginary psychologist would be, not whether scientific method is applicable to these aspects of behaviour but what weight should be attached to particular evidence.

Similarities in Scientific and Religious Method

Yet the attempt to think scientifically about religion is likely to make most scientists and most theologians equally uneasy. They have become accustomed to assume that they deal with different orders of experience, to which different methods are applicable. Scientific truth, many would argue, consists of hypotheses confirmed by observation and is therefore limited to truths about things which can be observed. Religious truth consists of beliefs, derived from revelation and authority, about things which cannot be observed ; and though these beliefs can be confirmed by individual experience, these experiences cannot be compared as scientific observations can be compared. They are

¹ Bartlett, *Religion as Experience, Belief, Action*.

individual and largely incommunicable. This absolute division of fields is relatively recent. Though partly true, it was never as true as it was supposed to be and it seems to me to be much less true now than it was, because of the steady extension of the methods and interests of science into the field of human nature and behaviour.

The observations of science are themselves "experiences". They are by no means repeatable by anyone. Even those which are not difficult to understand in principle, such as the evidence on evolution supplied by fossils, need both experience and aptitude—whatever that word may cover—to interpret. Over large fields both the hypotheses of science and the observations which confirm them are within the grasp of very few. Moreover, many scientific hypotheses which work sufficiently well to claim authority are based on observations which cannot, at present at all events, be expressed in quantitative terms. Such are most of the observations of psychiatry. It is, therefore, by no means clear that the "observations" which confirm a scientific hypothesis are always different in kind from the "experiences" which confirm a religious faith.

Again, a scientific hypothesis derives its authority not only from "fitting the facts" but also from fitting other accepted hypotheses. There are many "observations" which await explanation, not because no hypotheses can be found to explain them, but because those which suggest themselves are too uncongenial to the already accepted hypotheses to win a footing. The evidence for precognition, telepathy and telekinesis, for instance, may not be conclusive but few will suppose that this mass of provocative phenomena would have been neglected for so long if they had not pointed to conclusions which seemed inconsistent with currently accepted truth. It would be naïve to suppose that "authority" plays no part for good and ill in sponsoring scientific truth, though authority in science has on the whole been uniquely successful at coming to terms with unfamiliar truth disguised as heresy.

Nor is it true to say that science proceeds no further than the evidence will sustain her. On the contrary she is always ahead of the evidence. Something is assumed to be true and its truth is then verified by results. The first step is an intuitive leap ; and the creative mind in any field appears to guess right far more confidently and far more often than any visible evidence would seem to explain. Thus the most exact science proceeds by way of something not unlike revelation.

Religion, for its part, has never hesitated to appeal to the scientific criterion that "it works". If Christianity had not been seen to "work" both by Christian "experiencers" and by pagan "observers", it would hardly have come to dominate Rome within three hundred years of its inconspicuous birth in a remote province. Its seers have arrived at what they believe to be the heart of the matter by routes which cannot be charted in text-books for all to follow ; and they have confirmed their beliefs by experiences which cannot be communicated and which only a few have been able to share ; but this is by no means so different from the progress of science as we have been accustomed to think. Differences there are ; the frontiers of science are useful boundary lines, but like other frontiers they mask some important continuities and distort many differences which are only of degree.

The message of religion concerns the nature of God and man. Seers who have proceeded by the routes of biology, psychology and sociology are now telling a different story, less comprehensive but covering essential parts of the same ground, concerning the nature of man ; and so far as it goes, it seems to offer some fundamental contradictions and some equally striking confirmations. It is neither feasible nor reasonable to keep these fields of creative thought apart. On the contrary, there seems to be every reason to relate them as closely as possible.

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Conclusion

To conclude, let me return to my "ordinary man"—not yet, I admit, very ordinary but of a cast of mind which must become more common as the ideas now current among scientists get more general circulation. His mental picture of reality has little, if any, room for the special creation of man. He does not believe in his tripartite nature. He can understand much better than his father how he comes to have a "personality", but he has far greater difficulty, imaginative and intellectual, in supposing that he has an immortal soul. He can understand an immanent, more easily than a transcendent God, whilst the externalized patriarchal concept which served his ancestors is peculiarly unreal to him. On the other hand, his mental picture offers no resistance to the idea that there is only one ruling passion which can co-ordinate his own powers, bring him into harmony with his neighbour and set his heart in a citadel of peace. Indeed, this thought is half established in his mind by purely secular thinking. In a word, he becomes increasingly resistent to the Christian metaphysic and increasingly responsive to the Christian dynamic. This striking divergence seems to me to be by far the most significant fact in the interaction of science and religion to-day.

SOUTH AFRICA'S TRAVAIL

SOUTH AFRICA is a more bitterly divided country to-day than at any time since the Anglo-Boer War. On the one hand there is the head-on collision between two incompatible European political traditions. On the other are discernible the first tentative steps towards a united coloured front against the discriminatory laws and regulations which constitute the South African colour bar.

The Nationalists represent about two-thirds of the Afrikaner people and 45 *per cent* of the 1948 electorate—almost

certainly less to-day. This is much the highest poll by Dr. Malan's "purified" Nationalists since Hertzog's and Smuts' followers merged into the United Party in 1933 and is considered by all observers to be near the maximum they can hope for under the present constitution. Owing to the loading in favour of rural constituencies, it gave them a majority of seven in the Assembly which they increased to thirteen by winning all the South-West Africa seats in 1950 by small margins.

The Nationalist political and racial tradition is patriarchal, though socially egalitarian for those who share its narrow loyalties and a low degree of dermal pigmentation. Its fissiparous tendencies are held in check by the Dutch Reformed Churches, the deliberately sustained sense of historic grievance and the fear of being swamped by a flood of colour released by liberal policies.

In attacking the Cape Coloured vote it seeks to give expression to its doctrine of the *baasskap*—the perpetuation of white political supremacy and the master-servant relationship between the white and coloured races. It also hopes to obtain a direct electoral advantage of at least eight Cape seats and a further four to six seats as a result of the subsequent delimitation of constituencies.

The United Party stands generally for the liberal, democratic, political tradition, but with reservations. The most important of these concern racial policy. There is a small liberal element which hopes to enlarge the political, economic and social opportunities of responsible and educated members of the coloured races. But three-quarters or more of the United Party desire to maintain the racial *status quo*: to assist the gradual development of the non-Europeans but to retain the colour bar except where practical considerations or mounting pressure compel slight concessions. In 1936 the U.P. led by Hertzog and supported by Smuts did constitutionally for the Cape Native vote what the Nationalists are trying to-day to do for the Coloured vote unconstitutionally. This was, of course, a negation of the

liberal tradition. It has been the great weakness of the U.P. that it has not been able to oppose the Nationalist principle of the *baasskap* with a morally sound and emotionally attractive principle of its own. There is much truth in the Nationalist argument that the U.P.'s present defence of the Coloured franchise is less concerned with principle than with its electoral interests; and the retort of *tu quoque* is a poor salve for uneasy consciences.

But if the present crisis is, so far as it concerns the Coloured vote, a clash of interests rather than principles, the intensity of those interests has led to a situation in which the possibility of compromise appears to be remote. It is now well known that the South African constitution, as embodied in the South African Act of 1909, prohibits the restriction of the Coloured franchise except by a two-thirds majority of both Houses of Parliament sitting together. However, it is the Nationalist contention that the Statute of Westminster, although neither the British nor South African parliaments intended it, implicitly deprived the South Africa Act of its legal validity. They are fortified in this belief not only by various legal opinions but also by a 1937 decision of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court which declared the South African parliament to be legally and judicially sovereign in the same sense as the British parliament. In this belief, for which strong *legal* grounds could be adduced, the Separate Representation of Voters Act was passed last year by a bare majority in each House.

Against this argument that the South African Act is invalid there are an equal number of legal opinions and the cumulative *moral* obligations, which should have been decisive, of the solemn compact of Union and the pledges from members of all parties in the 1931 and 1934 debates to respect the entrenched clauses of the constitution. Many men in the present government gave such pledges and nothing in the 1937 judgment absolves them from honouring them. The recent decision of the Appeal Court overrules the 1937 decision and brings the *legal* position into line with

the *moral* one. It re-establishes the constitution as its founders and those who accepted the Statute of Westminster for South Africa always intended that it should operate.

The present Nationalist move to smash the constitution by superseding the power of the Courts to enforce its procedure is a desperate measure. Clearly Dr. Malan does not dare appeal to the country until his party has obtained the electoral benefits which it hopes will accrue from the disenfranchisement of the Coloureds. Whether parliamentary government can continue when a parliamentary majority is determined to alter the very law by which it exists, in defiance of that law and against the wishes of the majority of the electorate, remains to be seen.

The Government justifies its present intention on three grounds. First, in the words of a Nationalist senator, that "the country must be kept White *at all costs*" (my italics). This requires the entrenchment of a Nationalist majority in parliament. Secondly, that an "intolerable and unacceptable" constitutional situation has been "created" by "a court of five paid officials" over which parliament has "the authority of abolition". Government spokesmen aver the dubious juridical proposition that there are now two equal and conflicting judgments of the Appeal Court and that they are as free to accept the 1937 one as their opponents the 1952 one. This argument avoids the question of moral obligations, solemnly contracted and repeatedly re-affirmed. It also evades the reasoning which compelled Chief Justice Centlivres reluctantly to dissent from the earlier ruling after hearing a week of arguments on the constitutional issues. These issues were only raised half an hour before the 1937 judgment was given.

Thirdly, the Government professes to see in the judgment of a Court, none of whose members were of British extraction, "a revival of the attacks of imperialism on nationalism". The Nationalists, so much of whose emotional strength is the deliberately stimulated residue of the Boer War, paradoxically reject for themselves a sovereignty with

defined constitutional limitations such as serves most of the free nations of the world, and now desire the unlimited sovereignty which only the British and New Zealand parliaments possess. Although the South Africa Act merely gave expression to an agreement freely reached between South Africans, the Nationalists now refuse to accept "the constitutional enslavement of South Africa to the legislation of a superior British parliament" and their press has called upon the Government to rely upon the "National nation" in its fight to secure "the freedom of the Afrikaner". Nationalist M.P.s have already spoken of "The Third War for Freedom"—the first two being those of 1880 and 1899.

This is precisely the situation which the constitution was designed to prevent—the imposition of a small majority will (in this case, an actual minority will) upon a different political tradition unless a substantial section of the other tradition supports the reform. The United Party coalition and their extra-parliamentary allies, the Torch Commando, will challenge the latest legislation in the Courts where since its declared purpose is to evade the entrenched clauses, it is clearly vulnerable. But if they are refused access to the Courts or if, the Court having decided in their favour, the Government tries to prevent the Court's decision being made effective, a revolutionary situation will have been created. Either the Opposition parties will have to accept passively the abrogation of the constitution, the rigging of the vote (with worse to follow when the Native representatives are abolished and the *platteland* loading increased) and the surrender of their honour and much of their chances of ever regaining power constitutionally; or they will have to withdraw their allegiance from an illegal government, until decency is restored to South African political life. The consequences of either action are incalculable.

Meanwhile, the coloured races have watched with resentment while the political and social boundaries of their world are progressively diminished. The Supreme Court has

been the one stable and impartial guardian of their remaining rights. Now, when it decides in their favour, the Government seeks to nullify the decision and render the Court ineffective. The meetings called by the African National Congress and the S.A. Indian Congress on April 6th to protest against discriminatory legislation were poorly attended and unconvincing demonstrations. Nevertheless, the adoption by these bodies of a programme of passive resistance should warn all but the wilfully blind that the days of coloured disunity are nearly over. Nothing brings unity more quickly than a good cause to fight *against* and the emotional response to martyrdom and self-sacrifice. The African National Congress, supported by the S.A. Indian Congress, has appealed for a fund of a million shillings and 10,000 volunteers to begin passive disobedience of discriminatory laws. If the Nationalists win the present constitutional battle, uncompromising white nationalism will soon be confronted with implacable black nationalism. If they lose, the possibility will be preserved that right and reason may prevail in race relations. But it will remain to be proved.

C. W. M. GELL.

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

CULTURE, RECREATION AND SERVICE

DEAR SIRs,

May I say that I share Mr. Wiseman's appreciation of Brother Lawrence, and would endorse his plea that Christians must accept in a spirit of dedication the daily work that actually comes to their hand, rather than "attempt to run away from the centre of our duty"? And may I suggest that, perhaps, if he had had the benefit of better tools to help him in his daily work on the day when he read my letter in the June *Frontier*, he would have noticed that I did *not* plead to be "saved from the frustrations of slavery"? I did claim that the use

of modern tools does save us from that ; though I admit that I also suggested that we could usefully enjoy more leisure.

The point at issue is not the dignity of manual labour. On that Mr. Wiseman and I are agreed ; though we should admit that we have surprisingly little scriptural backing for our belief.

(Try to find four suitable lessons for Industrial Sunday !)

No, the original question, and an important one, is whether it is legitimate to use labour-saving tools in the home. By his commendation of priests who go into industry, Mr. Wiseman implies that the use of machinery in factories is capable of dedication ; but he does not hold with labour-saving tools at home. Does he not even use hot water, a dish mop, and a detergent ?

I have no time, as a priest, to "go into industry", though I hope, through more efficient use of my limited resources, to do a little more factory visiting in future. I write only as a priest recruited from industry. I know, only too well, the dangers of an idolatry of machinery. But I do believe that the ability to design and use tools is a true gift of God to humanity; and that machine tools make it possible for the fruits of civilization to be enjoyed by every man (and his wife) and not only, as formerly, by a privileged minority. "Frustration" (I find by reference to that admirable tool of civilized man *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*) was the wrong word for me to have used ; what I wanted was a word implying "waste of effort", rather than "failure". It is "waste of effort" to dig with bare hands when pick and shovel are available ; it is equally "waste of effort" to use pick and shovel for a task that can better be done by a bulldozer, or to use a bulldozer for a small task that would be better done by hand.

During the next fortnight I hope both to get to the seaside by car and to dig, with my bare hands, sand castles with my children.

I shall enjoy both activities, and do not believe that Mr. Wiseman will really grudge me my holiday, or suggest that we should walk it. Though perhaps, like the old lady in an Edwardian *Punch*, he may feel that we should have gone by train "as God intended that we should" !

GEORGE JAGER.



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